



Customer Solution Case Study

Windows interoperability creates new markets and fresh opportunities for open source company

Overview

Region: Asia Pacific

Industry: IT Services

Customer Profile

Based in New Zealand, SilverStripe is an open source web development company delivering content management systems and development services to businesses throughout Australasia, Europe and the USA. SilverStripe employs 20 specialists who work with over 200 organizations in the private and public sector.

Business Situation

Following recent commercial success, SilverStripe was prompted to broaden its target market. As a result, the company shifted its focus to larger government and corporate organizations to ensure long-term growth.

Solution

SilverStripe worked with Microsoft to add IIS support to the CMS, encouraging easy installation and powerful performance in a Windows environment.

Benefits

- Expanded target markets
- Increased revenues
- Added value to customers through integrated systems offering
- Reduced deployment time and costs
- Enhanced customer experience offering

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Sigurd Magnusson, Co-founder and Chief Marketing Officer, SilverStripe

Founded in 2000, SilverStripe is an open source web development company, delivering content management systems (CMS) and development services to businesses throughout Australasia, Europe and the USA. A growing number of developers were choosing to run its PHP based CMS application in a Microsoft® Windows® environment, but were confronted by problems installing and running the software. The significant demand for a Windows compatible version of the CMS soon made it clear that greater interoperability with the Microsoft platform would encourage broader adoption of the software. The successful addition of Windows support to SilverStripe CMS has expanded the potential market for the technology, creating additional opportunities for service revenue growth.



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Sigurd Magnusson, Co-founder and Chief Marketing Officer, SilverStripe

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Situation

Since its establishment in 2000, New Zealand based website and software development firm, SilverStripe, has gone from strength-to-strength, picking up a string of awards as one of the fastest growing technology companies in Asia-Pacific. During this time, the company has become recognized as a leading provider of commercial open source CMS software. SilverStripe worked alongside Microsoft in 2008 to deliver the website for the Democratic National Convention. Built on SilverStripe CMS and Microsoft® Silverlight™ technologies, the site attracted 3.2 million visitors and delivered 350,000 hours of video in a four-day period.

In its early years, SilverStripe developed proprietary, licensed software but switched to an open-source model in November 2006, releasing its CMS and application framework to the community. Since then, SilverStripe’s development platform has been downloaded more than 140,000 times, creating an active community of developers who have helped to refine and extend the base code. SilverStripe couples publicly available open source applications with bespoke PHP development to deliver custom built web properties.

The company’s recent commercial success has seen its business aspirations grow, prompting an increased focus on large public sector and corporate organizations. In order for SilverStripe to become a competitive player in this market, the company needed its PHP/MySQL based CMS system to run effectively on the Windows platforms that are common among many businesses and government departments. Overcoming the historically difficult installation and poor performance of PHP applications in a Windows environment would be important to unlocking this target market.

“It soon became clear that properly supporting the Microsoft server family was important to our long-term growth. We needed our software to install smoothly on the Windows platform and deliver a compelling user experience. Until we solved this issue, we would frustrate our open source community and lose out on large commercial deals,” said Sigurd Magnusson, Co-founder and Chief Marketing Officer at SilverStripe.

“Nearly 40 percent of installations of SilverStripe CMS are on a Microsoft platform,

so we knew there was high demand for us to officially support Internet Information Services version 7.0, Windows Server and SQL Server. Some developers had even attempted re-writing the application as a short term fix, however it continued to be a source of frustration for them,” Magnusson added.

Solution

While SilverStripe recognized the importance of developing a Windows compatible version of its CMS software, it had little experience working on the Microsoft platform. Fortunately, SilverStripe’s achievements had captured the attention of Microsoft, which recognized a mutually beneficial opportunity for the companies to work together.

“SilverStripe continues to inspire others in the New Zealand web community and raises expectations about what can be achieved by a small company with offshore aspirations. As an active participant in this community, Microsoft welcomed the opportunity to work with the SilverStripe team,” said Nigel Parker, Web Development Advisor, Microsoft New Zealand.

This understanding led to the formation of a Joint Development Programme (JDP) to help SilverStripe CMS become fully supported on the Windows platform. In addition, SilverStripe was accepted into Microsoft’s BizSpark initiative – an innovative program that unites start-ups with entrepreneurial and technology resources to help accelerate business development.

As part of the JDP, Microsoft delivered expert technical support free of charge and provided access to Windows and SQL test servers, to assist SilverStripe with the development process. Almost immediately, SilverStripe recognized the potential for the Internet Information Services version 7.0 upgrade in Windows Server® 2008 to play a central role in the Windows version of its CMS product.

IIS7.0 is the latest version of Microsoft’s web server technology and has been specifically designed to allow greater adaptability and customization. It supports a range of applications, including those built using PHP, making it a suitable Microsoft web server for the SilverStripe CMS.

“We’ve already begun working towards delivering full support for SQL Server and are confident that greater interoperability with the Windows platform will contribute to further success in the years ahead.”

Using the new URL Rewriting support in IIS7.0, SilverStripe was able to deliver the full functionality of its software on a native Microsoft web server, without relying on third-party plug-ins. SilverStripe v2.3.0 was released in February 2009 and for the first time, could be easily installed on an IIS platform.

“IIS matches Apache for hosting PHP applications on Windows and also provides additional benefits when delivering high quality video through a SilverStripe website,” said Jorke Odolphi, Web Platform Architect, Microsoft Australia.

It soon became apparent however that many members of the SilverStripe community were running Windows Server® 2003 and Windows® XP, which required support for IIS6.0 and IIS5.0 respectively. This created a new challenge for SilverStripe, which turned to Microsoft’s technical experts to help determine the best way to achieve backwards IIS compatibility.

“Access to expert Microsoft technical staff and hosted servers allowed SilverStripe to update its CMS product for the Windows platform and verify it worked well in a variety of operating system environments. In particular, the close interaction between the teams was invaluable in helping us to effectively achieve IIS compatibility and ensure that the SilverStripe CMS is fully supported across Windows Server 2008, Windows Server 2003, Windows® 7, Windows Vista® and Windows® XP,” added Magnusson.

Benefits

SilverStripe has experienced a number of benefits since incorporating support for Windows into its CMS software. While the updated technology has only recently been released to the community, already it has created new commercial opportunities for SilverStripe and helped the company secure a substantial web project in the competitive Government sector. In addition, the SilverStripe CMS for Windows has been included in the latest version of the Microsoft Web Platform Installer, exposing the technology to hundreds of thousands of potential users worldwide.

Securing new opportunities

SilverStripe’s addition of IIS support to its CMS has opened up a broad new market for the company, allowing it to more effectively

engage with the large commercial and public sector customers running Windows Server technologies. As a result, the company has expanded the breadth of its potential market, creating additional opportunities for service revenue growth.

“More than two thirds of SilverStripe’s customers run on Windows and they are now able to confidently deploy our software on the Microsoft platform. The addition of IIS support for SilverStripe CMS opens up a diverse new market and will contribute to our plans for sustainable long-term growth. PHP performance with IIS is good, delivering a user experience that is both fast and reliable,” said Magnusson

“In addition, interoperability between SilverStripe CMS and IIS enables customers to leverage the investments they’ve already made in Microsoft technology. In an economic environment where businesses are focused on getting the most out of their IT infrastructure, organizations are attracted by the ability to do more with less,” added Magnusson.

SilverStripe CMS’ support for Windows was central to it securing a significant website development contract with one of New Zealand’s largest local government bodies, the Greater Wellington Regional Council. gw.govt.nz and metlink.co.nz are heavily trafficked council and official public transport sites that necessitate a stable and reliable content management platform.

“The upcoming upgrade of the council’s official websites to SilverStripe CMS is a major initiative. Our choice to implement the SilverStripe solution was based on it being a user friendly and flexible product. In addition, it was important we could consolidate our IT infrastructure on Windows Server and SQL Server. This approach will deliver simplified management of our websites and mean a centralization of our web server stack to Windows Server 2008, IIS7 and SQL Server 2008,” said Brett Sangster, communications manager, Greater Wellington Regional Council.

Reduction in deployment time and costs

The merit of SilverStripe CMS with support for Windows has been acknowledged by Microsoft Corporation, resulting in the application being made available as part of the updated Web platform installer (Web PI) from March 2009. This free tool allows

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For more information about SilverStripe visit: www.silverstripe.com

developers to install either the entire Microsoft web platform or a customized selection of applications. Including SilverStripe in the Web PI significantly eases the install and upgrade path for existing and future developers of the SilverStripe software. When building or deploying a SilverStripe CMS solution on Windows, the Microsoft Web Platform Installer enables developers to get a new SilverStripe website up and running in just minutes.

"Web PI makes installing SilverStripe CMS easier than ever before. Not only have we overcome the performance issues associated with installing PHP applications on a Windows platform, but following the work done with the Microsoft IIS team, the experience is now even faster than deploying on Linux or Mac. It's a complete reversal from the situation prior to starting the JDP with Microsoft and I have to admit, it isn't something I expected," said Magnusson.

In addition, SilverStripe CMS was one of just ten select applications included in the Microsoft Web Application Gallery when it was launched in March 2009.

"Microsoft handpicked a small sample of leading PHP and .NET applications to be part of its new Web Application Gallery. "SilverStripe CMS was included in this group because it is a great product with a passionate user base. We're delighted by SilverStripe's commitment to working with Microsoft and its focus on delivering a compelling experience for its CMS community on IIS," said Bill Staples General Manager, Web Platform and Tools, Microsoft.

"It has been a pleasure working with SilverStripe through the JDP. The speed at it

was able to create a Windows version of its product and go to market has been remarkable. The inclusion of SilverStripe CMS in the Web Application Gallery will extend the reach of the technology," added Michael Joffe, Senior Product Manager, PHP on Windows, Microsoft.

While SilverStripe is excited about the opportunities created by its involvement with Microsoft, according to Magnusson, the work so far is just a hint of things to come.

"There's little doubt in my mind that SilverStripe's product adoption, credibility and growth have all been enhanced through our involvement with Microsoft. We've already begun working towards delivering full support for SQL Server and are confident that greater interoperability with the Windows platform will contribute to further success in the years ahead," Magnusson said.

Windows Server 2008

Windows Server 2008, with built-in Web and virtualization technologies, enables you to increase the reliability and flexibility of your server infrastructure. New virtualization tools, Web resources, and security enhancements help you save time, reduce costs, and provide a platform for a dynamic and optimized datacenter. Powerful new tools like IIS 7.0, Server Manager, and Windows® PowerShell, allow you to have more control over your servers and streamline Web, configuration, and management tasks. It is the only platform that lets you host both ASP.NET and PHP applications side-by-side in a single, consolidated environment--using the new FastCGI module. Advanced security and reliability enhancements like Network Access Protection and the Read-Only Domain

Software & Services

- Microsoft® SQL Server® 2008
- Microsoft® Silverlight™
- Windows Server® 2003
- Windows Server® 2008
- Windows® 7
- Windows® Vista
- Windows® XP
- Internet Information Services version 7.0
- Internet Information Services version 6.0
- Internet Information Services version 5.0
- Web Platform Installer
- Web Application Gallery

Controller option for Active Directory Domain Services harden the operating system and help protect your server environment to ensure you have a solid foundation on which to build your

For more information, go to:

www.microsoft.com/windowsserver2008
www.iis.net/

To download the Web Platform installer go to:

<http://www.microsoft.com/web/downloads/platform.aspx>